
growing an **INCLUSIVE** city
FROM VISION TO REALITY

THE WASHINGTON, DC, COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Comp Plan Week #1: Summary of Public Comments

March 2005

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Appendix A: Transcribed Discussion Comments from All Small Group Work Sessions

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Introduction

As part of the first stage of the District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan revision, the Office of Planning hosted Comp Plan Week #1. From January 25 through 29, over 500 residents of the DC area participated in four community workshops around the city and shared their opinions about key issues that affect our city and its future.

Participants attended meetings held at public schools across the city: McKinley Technical High School; Paul Junior High Charter School; Ballou High School; and Shaw Junior High School. At these workshops participants generated ideas and suggestions about a number of significant questions facing the city and how the Comp Plan should address them.

The three-hour meetings followed a "conference" type format, with attendees gathering for a 45-minute "opening session" to frame the issues and then going to break out groups in school classrooms. The Saturday January 29 meeting also featured a community fair, with an extra hour of content and a closing session to wrap up Comp Plan Week #1.

The community workshops sought public input on four sets of key issues that the plan will address:

- Land Use and Transportation
- Access to Employment
- Housing Choices
- Environmental Quality

Participants were asked to respond to discussion points on each topic, and offer their ideas and suggestions for policies addressing these topics.

Workshop participants at each of the four meetings shared their opinions primarily in small work sessions of about 20 people each to discuss various aspects of these four main topics. Each small group had an experienced facilitator and scribe who recorded all comments offered by work session participants. Participants chose which sessions they wanted to participate in and the sessions were scheduled so people could participate in several sessions on different topics.

This summary of participant input is presented in three main segments:

1. A summary that highlights the comments generated and recorded at the small workshop sessions on each of the four main topics cited above.
2. A summary of the detailed written responses on the comment forms distributed at the work sessions, including the priority rankings for each statement on the forms; and
3. A brief overview of the evaluation comments on the public meetings that were turned in by those attending.

These three sets of summaries are supplemented by two separate appendices to this report that include the complete transcription of all breakout group notes and all comment forms. The first transcribes verbatim all the comments from the flip charts from the work sessions as well as comments from a Legacy Wall outside the work session format in which participants could make comments on any issue they chose. The second appendix cites all the written comments that were submitted on work sheets distributed at each of the small group sessions.

Comp Plan Week #1 was the beginning of the public discussion. There will be additional meetings in the months to come as the planning process continues. For more information about the Comp Plan revision timeline and process please visit www.inclusivecity.org.

Section One

Discussion Comments from Small Group Work Sessions

This section highlights the flip chart comments made by those participating in the small group discussions at each of the public meetings. These comments were recorded by the session “scribe” in response to the discussions as they unfolded. For convenience, they have been organized under general topics and subtopics that categorize the most common issues raised at these sessions. Appendix A lists all the verbatim transcribed flip chart comments in the order they were made at each of these small group discussions.

Land Use and Transportation

The Land Use and Transportation work sessions covered a wide array of issues, ranging from concerns about the appropriate mix of uses and densities in future development to the need for more coordinated transportation system planning. The discussion comments generally fell under one of the categories and subgroups listed below. The highlights of each group are discussed in more detail in the pages that follow.

Land Use Planning

- Proper uses, mixing uses and development priorities
- Scale and density concerns
- Transportation/land use coordination and transit-oriented development (TOD)
- Review and zoning processes; public involvement

Transportation Planning

- Transportation plan issues including regional issues
- Highway, corridor, street specific planning issues
- Transit planning
 - Metrorail
 - Light rail
 - Bus system and quality of services
- Cycling issues
- Traffic management and impacts on communities (e.g., noise, traffic calming, congestion management, trucking issues)

Parking Issues (supply/demand and impacts on neighborhoods)

Pedestrian Needs/Safety/Amenities

The following are some of the overall highlights of the discussions that touched on each of these topics.

Land Use Planning

- Much of the discussion on land use focused on issues of appropriate mix of uses and the scale and intensity of such uses. (*“How to maintain character of existing neighborhoods and still accommodate growth?” ... “Conserve sense of place” “Public/private partnership between government and developers – to make developer’s designs more humane and livable....”*)
- There was much concern that many neighborhoods often specified in the discussion could become overwhelmed by new redevelopment. (*“My interest is keeping neighborhoods that work from developing to the unworkable.” ... “Channel redevelopment where people want it, not where they don’t.” “We need major public debate about the Mayor’s proposal to increase DC population.”*)
- Most of the land use discussions turned on residential uses and potential impacts on these uses. (*“Need models of healthy community diverse/healthy/walkable pictures and models.”*) Though there was some discussion of adding stores and services to neighborhoods and of mixed use. (*“Protect small neighborhood retail” “Economic development in distressed areas in cooperation with the federal government.”*)
- The quality and character of higher density was a general concern. (*“Density is the biggest issue. Need to have a public conversation about whether or not we need/want increased density.”*)
- Issues of scale and density were especially tied to the idea of Transit Oriented Development (TOD). Some participants suggested higher densities might be more appropriate at transit stations, though this was not the view of all participants. (*“Existence of Metro station doesn’t mean surrounding with 10-story buildings.”*)
- Most discussion regarding coordinating land use and transportation was focused on Metrorail though some participants linked land use to broader transportation planning issues. (*“Mix housing/retail/office and good public transportation (increase density).”*)
- A good deal of discussion on land use issues turned on participants experience or perceptions of the current review and approval processes. Some participants expressed concerns about consistency in implementing Comp Plan goals as well as specific development plans and the ability of local areas to have a say in planning and zoning decisions. (*“Local planning process needs to be more open and inclusive of community views.” “Better coordination of planning for projects in same neighborhood so that citizens can get info and be heard.” “More power for mayor to stop development.” “Less power for wealthy developers.” “How do all planning agencies and organizations cooperate and understand [their] role??” “H Street corridor is a model of how to develop with neighbors input...”*)

Transportation Planning

- Transportation planning comments were many and highly varied, ranging from general transportation planning coordination for the entire District and regional neighbors to demands for traffic management and calming in specific locales.
- There were some calls for more coordinated citywide and regional transportation planning but most discussion on highways and roads focused was on specific corridors or locations. (*“Maintain and improve existing roads (e.g., Benning Road); redesign for turn lanes, access, lighting, crossing safety...”*)
- The role and the future of Metrorail and many calls for improving the coverage, efficiency and appeal of the bus network were the main focus of discussions on transit. (*“Reconsider how bus connections are routed.” “Improve security at bus stops as in Metro stations.” “Experiment with small, short cross-town routes.”*)
- Light rail received some attention (*“Light rail would encourage use of commercial corridors by pedestrians”*) but less than bus or Metrorail issues. In some cases light rail was not embraced as a transit solution. (*“Streetscars do not improve speed or capacity.”*)

- Bicycling received some attention at some of the sessions, generally regarding increased accommodation for cyclists and their safety along streets.
- Many comments were on traffic impacts in neighborhoods, e.g., cut-through commuter traffic, impacts from trucking, specific bottlenecks or intersections, the need for traffic calming, etc. (*“Traffic calming in alleys [on case by case basis].” “No truck deliveries during day.” “...protect neighborhoods from Metro traffic backing up into neighborhoods.”*) Such concerns complemented those tied to parking issues and how they affect neighborhoods.

Parking Issues

- Some sessions paid much attention to parking issues, especially as an issue in higher density development and as a local neighborhood issue. (*“The concern about density is largely about parking.” “Neighborhood based garages/structured parking that are not in central business district.”*)
- A number of comments called for publicly owned garages throughout DC that could be both a source of funds for the city and help alleviate parking shortages. Some of these suggestions were tied to making parking more affordable. (*“Municipal parking garages – money for city.” “We can’t only rely on public transportation. Create municipal parking around the city.” “Not enough parking – too expensive; no public parking in DC! Break precedent.”*)
- Commuter parking in neighborhoods was a complaint raised at several sessions and was sometimes tied to demands for more enforcement or additional areas subject to residential parking permits.
- Some of this commuter parking discussion was tied to concerns that increased transit use and new transit lines would increase such problems. (*“Do a better job of planning for parking for Metro.” “Create a policy of limited and short periods of parking associated with light rail unless you have permit.”*)

Pedestrian Needs/Safety/Amenities

- Increasing pedestrian safety and amenities were concerns expressed at some sessions. In general this concern was raised with regard to:
 - Lack of adequate facilities to encourage walking. (*“Put in more sidewalks and lighting to create safety and accessibility to Metro, re: pedestrian lights.” “Accessibility problems: No sidewalks, humiliating, need much more attention to accessibility.” “Development needs to be pedestrian friendly!”*)
 - Maintenance of existing walks
 - Safety of pedestrians along busy roads or at busy intersections e.g., need for right on red restrictions or ban on right on red. (*“Synchronization of traffic signals – need to take into account pedestrian needs – look at patterns...”*)
 - Locating stores and services close to people to encourage walking (*“Increase walkability [especially off commercial corridors].”*)

Other Issues

- Two sets of comments not focused on the above topics emerged at some discussions:
 - Many comments were made about the need for parks and recreation facilities in neighborhoods—a topic that was a feature of the Environmental Quality sessions. Such comments were related to discussions of land use and neighborhoods. (*“There needs to be a strong focus on recreational land uses especially for children.”*)
 - A few sessions spent much time talking about the overall purpose of the Comp Plan and criticisms of the Comp Plan process. (*“Overview: Focus on city we want vs. what we have*

now.” “Comp Plan would be better with less detail and more clear statement of philosophy and intent.” “Would like more transparency behind how we got to the premises we have today.”)

Access to Employment

The Access to Employment work sessions covered a range of topics, but the clearly dominant topic was the quality of the training and skills of DC residents to fill whatever job opportunities may exist or may be created. Another topic of wide interest centered on how to sustain and expand locally-oriented and locally owned small businesses in DC. The appropriate role of DC government in fostering appropriate job skills and nurturing small businesses was the other major focus of these discussions.

The discussion comments generally fell under one of the categories and subgroups listed below. The highlights of each group are discussed in more detail in the pages that follow.

Labor Force Skills and Training

- Training young people for employability (includes vocational training in schools)
- Training adults for employability
- Job opportunities and support for special population groups: former prisoners, drug dependent, homeless, single mothers
- Match skills to existing jobs or future opportunities

Promoting DC Small Businesses

- Need for DC owned-DC oriented economic development
- Small business relationships to local communities
- Tourism-oriented opportunities

Role of DC Government in Economic Development

- Incentives/support/regulation
- Effectiveness of DC-resident hiring or contracting requirements
- Zoning, BIDs and other land use issues

Other Job Related Actions

- Partnerships and internship opportunities with universities, trade organizations, employers, developers
- Federal presence opportunities

Education in General

- Schools and the community: access, curriculum, life skills
- School facilities and management

The following are some of the overall highlights of the discussions that touched on each of these topics.

Labor Force Skills and Training

- A clearly dominant topic was the need to improve the employability of DC residents, many of whom lack adequate skills. (*“Job growth -. yes, but for whom? Some have advantages and opportunities, others don’t ...”*)

- Ways to better prepare and assist students and adults to seek and hold jobs were frequently suggested. (*“Help people market personal skills.” “If community is not ready for jobs prepare the community.”*)
- Training young people for employability (with many suggestions to improve vocational training in schools) received a great deal of attention. Numerous comments touched on motivating and encouraging DC youth to become more employable.
- Training adults for employability was another frequently brought up issue. Discussion touched on issues of retraining, illiteracy and upgrading of skills to match new opportunities.
- Another area receiving much commentary was creating job opportunities and support for special population groups: including former prisoners, those with a history of drug dependency, and the homeless. Many declared that those trying to better themselves need to be encouraged (*“Address the ‘lost souls’. Don’t let the Plan exclude anyone.”*) and they should be given the means to succeed (*“...incremental steps to get back on feet”*).
- Single mothers and seniors (*“Will there be employment opportunities after age 55?”*) were other groups cited as needing specific consideration or job supports such as day care for single mothers.
- Whether to develop skills for existing jobs (or jobs for existing skills) or to concentrate more on future opportunities was a question that concerned many. Some felt DC should try to promote jobs that the current population is capable of filling. (*“Let’s attract businesses and industries who want to deal with the population who currently live here.”*) Other comments stressed the need to train (or retrain) more DC residents capable of filling jobs being created in fields such as technology or health care. (*“Look ahead. What careers/skills will need employees?”*)

Promoting DC Small Businesses

- Need for DC owned-DC oriented economic development was a frequent comment. This tied closely to demands for more DC government support for such businesses.
- Small businesses relationship to their local communities was a major subset of the desires for more DC based businesses. These comments frequently called for bringing more locally oriented commercial services and retail businesses to specific areas (e.g., Wards 7 and 8) or corridors such as Georgia Avenue, Alabama Avenue and many others.
- Tourism-oriented opportunities were mentioned by a few participants but did not receive the same degree of attention as commercial retail and services.

Role of DC Government in Economic Development

- The role of DC government in providing incentives, subsidies or loans or a better regulatory environment for small businesses was brought up frequently. (*“Create less hostile environment for small and medium sized businesses.” “Broaden ways to generate income. Entrepreneurial encouragement. Remove obstacles...”*) Suggested steps included helping small businesses acquire sites or properties, offering incentives to hire DC residents, establishing sites for incubators, promoting more tourism, and assisting in networking.
- Others suggested DC could do better promoting DC businesses through training potential entrepreneurs and better advertising the strengths that do exist. “Living wage” legislation was suggested several times.
- The need for and the effectiveness of DC-resident hiring or contracting requirements garnered much comment. Many felt existing requirements or goals were poorly managed. Creating local jobs was often cited as a requirement for DC located businesses obtaining financial aid.
- Zoning issues tied to business development mostly focused on needs for more mixed use opportunities or other zoning to bring more stores and services to neighborhoods.

Other Job Related Activities

- A number of suggestions were raised regarding potential partnerships and internship opportunities with universities, trade organizations, employers, and developers to create job opportunities or internships or as promoters of job skill growth. (*“Businesses should teach ‘how to succeed’.” “Create partnerships between schools and businesses.” “Partner with universities and federal agencies to become economic engines for development in their neighborhoods.”*)
- Despite the above quote, employment or business development opportunities tied to the federal presence in DC received only limited mention.

Education in General

- Aside from its role in job training or vocational training, there were a number of comments about improving the abilities of the DC schools to give students a well grounded and well rounded education and set of “life skills.” Needs included improved literacy and technology training and adding financial planning and career counseling programs. In part this would include partnerships with local businesses and institutions and more community service activities.
- Improving the role of UDC as the end stage of effective DC-based education was cited by several participants.
- Several participants brought up issues of school facilities and management, usually with regard to making schools more accessible to their local communities. One suggestion was that school renovation could be furthered by active partnerships with construction companies.

Housing Choices

The Housing Choices work sessions covered a wide range of issues, ranging from definitions of affordable housing and who needs affordable housing to the need for changes to zoning codes and supporting land uses for residential areas. There were many comments related to the impact of rising housing costs on renters and buyers as well as existing owners (tax assessment consequences).

The discussion comments generally fell under one of the categories and subgroups listed below. The highlights of each group are discussed in more detail in the pages that follow.

Availability and Quantity of Housing

- Expressed need for more affordable housing
- Promoting occupancy, preservation and rehabilitation of existing housing
- Creating new housing (all types)
- Rental units
- Specific government intervention to affect housing costs or consumer buying power
- Need to clarify issues, definitions, goals, and processes

Demand and Priorities

- Determining who meets the threshold for affordable housing
- Home ownership by families, certain professions, first-timers, renters; who should receive priorities
- Renters and rental rates, control and subsidy

Land Use and Development

- Characteristics of the land use mix and mix of users

- Qualitative factors of land use, such as safety and environmental concerns
- Density, growth, gentrification, infrastructure, and transportation

Legal Framework

- Zoning
- Statutes, regulations, plans and policies that relate generally to housing

Taxes and Finance Policy

- Incentives and subsidies
- Revenue, tax and fiscal policies

Other

- People with special housing needs such seniors, people with disabilities, ex-offenders, alternative housing, etc.
- Social and other services and needs and linkages
- Human considerations
- Decision making
- Communication
- Information and data

The following are some of the overall highlights of the discussions that touched on each of these topics.

Availability and Quantity of Housing

- Affordable housing was by far the most frequently mentioned topic with two main threads in the conversation:
 - the quantity of affordable housing and the range of housing choices, and
 - how to define who qualifies for affordable housing and how to assist them.
- Most participants simply expressed affordable housing as a priority, while others articulated very specific proposals about how to address the issue.
- Many defined the affordable housing problem as a lack of adequate middle class housing. (*“Big problem is that City lacks middle class housing - going from very poor to very rich.”*) or a lack of housing choices for all income groups (*“I want to live in a mixed income environment and in a City in which people who work [there] can afford to live there.”*).
- Comments ranged from encouraging the use of inclusionary zoning to link development with the construction of new housing units to reinvigorating the Homestead program and creating incentives to rehabilitate vacant and derelict properties.
- Other solutions suggested were more effective rent control, more co-housing, more coops, tax relief for homeowners, limits on “outside investors”, etc., even in one case more “alley housing”.
- Across all groups there was significant discussion about a lack consensus of what is “affordable” (*“Is the issue framed correctly?”*) and what circumstances must exist for people to successfully buy a house or find a suitable place to rent. (*“What are best practices in other cities?”*)

Demand and Priorities

- Some cited as inadequate the current income-based formulas, often because it is based on regional levels not DC levels and skews programs away from lower income needs.
- Many comments prioritized who should be first helped to buy houses: public employees, such as teachers and policeman (sometimes tied to DC residency requirements for such jobs) and families with children.

- Middle class families were identified as a group that should be encouraged to move into or return to DC (but not at the expense of current residents, many cautioned).
- Rental housing received much attention with most comments focused on finding new sources of subsidy for people who now hold Section 8 vouchers but who may lose benefits as the federal government moves to scale back or eliminate the program.
- A few participants noted the need to secure adequate relocation and the right return to their neighborhood for tenants who have been displaced due to development.
- Concerns were also expressed about frequent violations of the tenant “right of first refusal” law and about the need for continued or improved and more effective government rent control policies.

Land Use and Development

- Mixed land use development emerged as priority solution as it offers opportunities to meet goals of mixed income communities and housing types.
- There were frequent comments about preserving neighborhood characteristics and affordability. (*“Empower communities to develop as they wish. ”See each neighborhood as a small community.”*)
- There was a strong sentiment about developers as a group that needed more control and oversight by the government. On the other hand, many of the hopes for affordable housing and neighborhood quality rested with developers and the right level and mix of incentives was a frequent topic.
- There was no clear consensus of opinion about the level density and growth in general. There was mention of greater densities at Metro stations (*for example, “within 5 blocks”*), perhaps by raising height limits. But other comments (*“No more R-5 zoning in Ward 8; prefer R-1 and R-2.”*) indicated density changes might not always be welcome.
- A need for more services, such as retail in neighborhoods, was often cited as needed to make some areas more stable and attractive to new residents. Also as a way to expand tax base, temper tax burdens on existing residents and underwrite residential renewal or increased services (*“Residents of City do not pay for themselves, need more high density commercial to meet deficits.”*)
- A significant number of participants wanted an inclusionary zoning policy, which can result in more intense land development.
- Some voiced concerns about the “quality” of neighborhoods, such as safety and environmental concerns.

Legal Framework

- The most often voiced zoning solution was inclusionary zoning.
- Zoning to create mixed-income communities (not necessarily including inclusionary requirements) in mixed use developments throughout the city was also a frequently cited need.
- Participants suggested that the District was not enforcing its adequately existing laws, e.g., renter protections when apartments convert to condos.
- A few in the community believed that consultation and effective community involvement in development decisions in specific neighborhoods was lacking.

Taxes and Finance Policy

- Calls for housing incentives and subsidies to widen choices and help renters and new homeowners were often unspecific.

- When more specific suggestions were made, tax relief for owners and density bonuses for developers were frequently mentioned including suggestions for tax abatements, reduced or capped assessments, reverse mortgages and more effective addressing of such problems as “red lining” or tax liens on properties.
- It was recognized that many of these tools would affect DC revenues, tax and fiscal policies.

Other

- Siting community based special need residential facilities was recognized as an important land use and equity issue. Participants expressed concern with figuring out how to meet the special housing needs of people with disabilities, ex-offenders and especially seniors.
- Concomitant with the expression for neighborhood quality is a desire for more access to a larger number of social and other services. Developing neighborhood linkages to public schools was also talked about.
- Various issues about behavior and attitude were touched on: what people should do or what people should do for them.
- Finally, people believed that more and clearer information about housing choices would be helpful. The current programs and requirements are too numerous and too complex for many to understand how to benefit from them.

Environmental Quality

The Environmental Quality work sessions covered a wide range of issues, ranging from parks and open space concerns to the need for greater environmental awareness among citizens, agencies and businesses.

The discussion comments generally fell under one of the categories and subgroups listed below. The highlights of each group are discussed in more detail in the pages that follow.

Parks and Open Space

- Small parks vs. large parks
- Maintainability/usability of parks
- Safety/social issues (e.g. homelessness) that affect park appeal and use
- Local community responsibilities/oversight opportunities
- Federal vs. DC management
- System/hierarchy planning: e.g. recreation vs. open space priorities, use of school sites, role of non park green spaces such as cemeteries, etc.

Tree Cover

- Need/promotion of more tree plantings
- Maintenance/health issues
- Threats from development, roads and infrastructure

Pollution

- Water/Streams
- Sewer system problems
- Air quality
- Polluted sites/brownfields
- Visual (e.g., overhead wires)
- Miscellaneous environmental risks or issues

Resource Conservation

- Recycling, solid waste, etc.
- Energy conservation
- Green building development

Environmental Education and Management

- Environmental education
- Codes and enforcement

The following are some of the overall highlights of the discussions that touched on each of these topics.

Parks and Open Space

- A good deal of attention was paid to the value or need for small locally oriented parks and green spaces (*"Bigger not always better; smaller may fit nicer"*). Many participants were also fearful small parks are often paid insufficient attention by the city and some therefore discourage them (*"...pocket parks expensive to maintain; not usable for active recreation, good idea to invest in larger parks."*)
- Closely connected with this concern were issues about appropriate design, maintenance, and safety of such spaces, with some participants calling for more community involvement ("Adopt-a-Park Programs") in resolving such issues.
- There were numerous calls for better comprehensive planning for parks and open space to:
 - Achieve a more balanced array of different types (*"Balance: recreation e.g., ball fields vs. tree preservation/green necklace."*)
 - Promote better connections between green spaces; and
 - Sort out local DC and federal responsibilities.
- The recreation opportunities offered by school sites or the transformation of surplus school sites to local park facilities was also suggested by many (*"Preserve/open school yards to public [all use space] and green school yards!"*)
- While local parks are seen as a potential amenity for increasing the quality of life of specific neighborhoods (*"Prioritize neighborhoods that are most deprived of medium to large parks ..."*), there is an undercurrent of apprehension that current problems will not get resolved. (*"City has to take a stand to preserve green space." "...need enough authority behind plan to make a difference."*)

Tree Plantings

- There was much interest in the state of DC's trees in all the sessions, especially street trees.
- Many expressed dismay at the continued loss of trees or their poor maintenance, or removal for infrastructure or roadway improvements (*"Intersections are being enlarged, trees are being removed."*). Some felt that the District's commitment to protect such resources needs to improve, (*"Casey Tree Fund: didn't give money to city; planted trees aren't maintained by city [old trees dying too]...."*).
- Better protection of trees on private property, especially on development parcels, was another common concern.

Pollution

- Many types of pollution and threats to environmental quality were cited at all meetings.

- Water quality concerns ranged from the condition of DC’s waterways to drinking water quality.
- Loss of existing open space or other green space was seen as one source of water quality threats—increased runoff, loss of stream buffers, etc.
- The need to better separate storm water and sewerage systems was frequently brought up as one key to protecting streams.
- Air quality concerns and to some degree water quality were generally tied to auto use and many stressed the need for improved transit or more use of smart cars to reduce emissions.
- Recovering contaminated sites for new uses was raised in several instances.
- The visual pollution of overhead wires also received attention as something that diminished the overall quality of living in parts of DC.
- A number of participants noted how some of these problems, especially water quality and air quality, are regional issues and will require cooperation with neighboring jurisdictions.

Resource Conservation

- Resource conservation comments generally fell into three categories:
 - Resource conservation through recycling and how this affects current solid waste management practices;
 - Reductions in fuel consumption, primarily through less auto use, more transit and better vehicles; and
 - Promotion of “green building” practices. (*“Economic benefits of green design overlooked – saves energy.”*)
- DC government needs to find ways to encourage or require green building and site planning practices. (*“...have a “Department of Environment” to have a concerted focus....”*), in part by setting a good example in its adopting its own green practices.
- DC citizens need easier ways and more opportunities to recycle things such as household chemicals.

Environmental Education and Management

- Many expressed the need for promoting more environmental awareness (*“Aggressive communication program against littering”*), a call that divided into two distinctive sets of comments:
 - More environmental education, especially in the schools; and
 - Better and more extensive code development and enforcement.
- Environmental education in the schools could be formal but many informal opportunities could be offered, e.g., getting students involved in neighborhood improvements such as tree maintenance.
- Development practices need to be more environmentally sensitive (*“Environmental quality equals equity issue.”*) Developers and construction companies need more education on this issue but, in the last resort, environmental goals need to be backed up by a willingness to enforce codes and tighten requirements. (*“Create a law requiring that developers have conservation easement on sensitive sites. District must be able to identify sites.”* *“Hold private/public development [to] high standard responsible for providing quality of life components.”*)

Section Two

Written Comments from Small Group Work Sessions

This section highlights the written comments made by those participating in the group discussions at each of the public meetings. These comments were provided in response to worksheets distributed by the Office of Planning at the sessions and this summary of responses is organized by each of the questions. Appendix B lists all responses to the worksheet questions and is organized by date and location of the meetings.

Land Use and Transportation

The “Land Use and Transportation” discussion sessions covered a range of topics, from bus service and bike paths to density and parking. The sessions were centered on nine pre-defined discussion points. However, many participants came to these sessions prepared to talk about specific development and land use compatibility issues in their neighborhoods, indicating the need for follow-up discussions and sessions with a stronger land use focus in the coming months.

A summary of responses and comments on each of the nine discussion points is provided below. The discussion points are listed in terms of the number of participants at the four workshops who ranked them as “very important” or “important”. This report also provides an overview of the written comments from participants on topics that were not included on the “survey” portion of the worksheet.

Improve Bus Service and Connections, Especially On Cross-Town Routes

Respondents: 146
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 87%

This discussion point was rated as “very important” or “important” by more participants than any other point in the Land Use and Transportation sessions. There was overwhelming support for improvements to the bus system, including dedicated bus lanes and improved cross-town service. Support for better bus service was uniformly high at all four of the meeting sites.

One respondent described the need for bus routes serving as “wagon wheels to connect the spokes.” Several went further in their written comments, noting that bus improvements should take priority over light rail. A number of respondents stated that buses offered a less expensive, lower impact, and more effective way (than light rail) to improve mobility in the city.

Better Coordinate the Development Review and Approval Process with a Review of Impacts on Pedestrian, Bicycle, Transit and Vehicular Transportation Networks

Respondents: 139
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 78%

This was ranked as the second most important priority among the nine topics listed. Sentiments on this issue were strong at all four of the meeting sites, with many respondents linking their rankings on this point to comments about density and parking.

Some respondents called for level of service measurements to ensure that development does not push transportation facilities beyond capacity, or adequate public facilities standards to link development approval to infrastructure. A few respondents suggested that developers absorb a larger share of the cost to mitigate traffic impacts. Some respondents spoke to the need for a regional perspective, coordinating with adjacent jurisdictions as development is approved. The need for better parking management was raised repeatedly, although there were split opinions about whether more parking or less parking was the right approach.

Improve Design Standards and Traffic Planning Near Metro to Ensure that Nearby Neighborhoods are Protected and Buffered from Denser Development Around the Stations

Respondents: 143
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 78%

This discussion point was ranked as “very important” or “important” on more than three-quarters of the worksheets. Again, responses were consistent at all four meeting sites. And again, respondents often linked their rankings to annotated comments about density and development.

Respondents addressed the importance of improving street lighting and open space and creating an environment that was welcoming to pedestrians. Some suggested that pictures and models of transit-oriented development be provided, to better inform neighbors of what was envisioned. One commenter took exception to the notion of being “protected” from density (“density is not something I need to be ‘protected’ from—the issue is how to make density attractive at different scales.”) However, a larger number of respondents expressed concerns about more dense development (see more below under heading “Allow Increased Densities or Different Land Uses Around Transit Stations”).

Invest in Better and Safer Conditions for Pedestrians and Cyclists, Including New Bicycle Trails and Bike Lanes

Respondents: 145
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 74%

Almost 74 percent of the respondents rated pedestrian and bicycle investments as a very important or important priority. The ratings were particularly high at the Shaw and McKinley meetings, but participants at all meetings submitted written comments suggesting pedestrian and bicycling improvements.

Several participants spoke to the need for “pedestrians first” policies, and for improvements to bridges and streets to accommodate pedestrians. The need for more cross-town bicycle lanes was also brought up. Questions were raised about the relationship between the Comp Plan and the recently prepared Bicycle Plan.

Focus on Roadway and Bridge Investments that Address Conflicts Between Regional Traffic and Our Local Communities

Respondents: 145
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 72%

This topic was rated as a much higher priority on the east side of the city than on the west side. In fact, more than 90 percent of the respondents at Ballou and 80 percent at McKinley felt this was an important or very important priority. The percentages were much lower at Shaw and Paul Schools.

Some of the respondents submitted written comments about the need for street maintenance and repair, and promoted ideas like congestion pricing and commuter taxes. Others qualified their responses by noting that the city’s priority should be on fixing existing streets rather than building new highways. A few suggested specific road improvements, such as burying I-395 and installing a sound barrier along I-295. A number of respondents expressed concerns about the impact of Maryland- and Virginia-bound traffic on DC streets and highways.

Allow Increased Densities or Different Land Uses Around Transit Stations

Respondents: 145
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 68%

Although two-thirds of the respondents rated transit-oriented development (TOD) as an important or very important priority, this discussion point produced more intense and substantial qualifying responses than any of the other points. Feedback ranged from emphatic support to visceral opposition.

Probably the most consistent underlying message was to avoid a “one-size-fits-all” approach to TOD, and to instead focus density on stations where the capacity for additional growth was most evident. This sentiment is illustrated by the following worksheet excerpts:

- “every Metro station DOES NOT need to be surrounded by high-rises”
- “allow increased density only within three blocks of transit stations, except where not wanted”
- “allow increased and APPROPRIATE densities and mixes of transit nodes – bus and rail.”
- “increase density, but with sensitivity to site specifics”
- “only if the development is not massive and is not expensive rentals or condos”
- “general policies simply cannot be applied equally to all neighborhoods.”

A number of respondents expressed strong opposition to additional density, sometimes referring to specific places and stating their belief that such development would damage neighborhood character. Some respondents believed that open space and parkland would be converted to development. Some specifically linked density to concerns about parking and traffic. Some felt that additional density was appropriate on the east side of the city (Deanwood and Anacostia were mentioned) but not on the west. On the other hand, a few respondents expressed unqualified support for higher density near transit, in one case describing it as “socially responsible” and in another as something that would have a “positive impact on communities.”

Identify New Corridors Where New Mixed Use and Infill Development can be Accommodated

Respondents: 139
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 63%

Although there were few annotated comments regarding this topic, respondents again expressed reservations about the effects of new mixed use and infill development on traffic and parking. There were a number of references to specific corridors, including Martin Luther King Jr Avenue, New York Avenue, and Georgia Avenue. Some respondents felt that this statement needed to be clarified before they could respond, and others felt the city should focus on existing corridors before identifying new corridors for improvement.

Build New Light Rail Lines to Areas Not Served by Metro

Respondents: 140
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 61%

About 60 percent of the respondents felt that building light rail was very important or important. However, those opposed to light rail were more likely to write annotated comments on their worksheets. In such cases, respondents were concerned about the costs and environmental impacts. Others wondered where the funding would come from, and felt the money would be better spent on bus improvements. One respondent pointed out that streetcars were removed from many DC streets 50 years ago and questioned why the city would now put them back.

Complete Major Highway Improvement Projects and Consider Additional Circulation Improvements for Cars, Buses, Etc.

Respondents: 137
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 56%

This topic received the smallest number of “very important” and “important” ratings, although there were variations from meeting to meeting. Participants at the Ballou meeting were more likely to support highway improvements than participants at the other meetings. Less than one-third of the participants at the Shaw, Paul, and McKinley meetings felt this was a very important priority. A significant number of respondents at the Shaw meeting expressed an interest in reopening Klinge Road. Other respondents sought ways to discourage regional traffic on city streets. One participant summed it up by saying commuters should “leave their cars at the border and use public transit in the city”

Other Comments

Other topic areas addressed on the comment sheets from these sessions include:

Parking: Many respondents wrote about parking on their worksheets. There were split opinions, with some arguing for more parking in new development and others arguing for less. Some cautioned against doing “anything to encourage additional auto use” while others implored the city to “reexamine the construction of large buildings without parking, like the Convention Center.” Several respondents expressed an interest in more municipal parking lots and fee parking areas.

Car Sharing: Some participants strongly support expansion of car sharing programs.

Congestion Pricing: Some participants believe the city should use pricing mechanisms to mitigate traffic and parking problems (e.g. charging to use roads and parking areas).

New Public Facilities: Some cautioned against developing all vacant land, noting that some land must be reserved for parks and public facilities.

Planning Commission: The need for a DC Planning Commission was raised by at least two participants.

Colleges and Universities: Several respondents urged the city to have a more balanced perspective when planning for and around universities, emphasizing their positive contributions to the city.

Zoning: Several respondents used their worksheets to address specific zoning issues, such as the extension of the diplomatic overlay in the Sheridan-Kalorama neighborhood and the protection of the Chinatown neighborhood.

Process Issues: A number of respondents used their worksheets to express frustration with the community input process, emphasizing the need for good data to make more informed decisions, and the need for additional forums to voice their views on land use issues and place-specific land use and zoning conflicts.

Access to Employment

The “Access to Jobs” worksheet emphasized the locations of future employment centers in the city. However, the discussion sessions—and the comment sheets—invariably came back to the importance of education and job training as tools for increasing job access. Participants in these sessions provided many written comments on the need for vocational training, the hiring of DC residents, educational curriculum, and the role of universities and colleges in helping residents find quality jobs.

A summary of responses and comments on each of the eight discussion points is provided below. The discussion points are listed in terms of the number of participants at the four workshops who ranked them as “very important” or “important”. This report also provides an overview of the written comments from participants on topics that were not included on the “survey” portion of the worksheet.

Improve the Link between DC Residents and Jobs by Linking School Curriculum More Closely to Emerging Employment Sectors

Respondents: 81
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 89

Among the eight discussion points, respondents felt this was the most important priority. One respondent suggested starting job preparedness in elementary school. Most comments dealt with the need for more vocational training, apprenticeships, mentorship, and summer job programs. One person noted “college is not for everyone” and spoke to the need to help young people find “jobs in careers they are interested in.” Another suggested “more youth-based programs like Summerworks.” One person asked, “Why have DC’s training programs and schools failed to give residents the tools to be employed?” The need for post-secondary institutions like community colleges also was raised.

Some respondents felt that the “basics” needed to be addressed before job training could be enhanced. This came up not only in terms of education (e.g., decreasing illiteracy and improving funding for the schools) but also in terms of parenting, life skills and character. One person noted, “Many kids are not work-ready because of drugs, alcohol, and unwillingness to drop ‘hood’ [attire] and mannerisms.”

Create More Partnerships between DC’s Schools, Universities and Major Employers

Respondents: 80
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 88%

Several written comments emphasized the importance of universities and colleges to increasing access to jobs. Respondents called for “more universities...to align with DC high schools” and indicated “partnerships are key.” The need for colleges east of the Anacostia River was mentioned. One respondent felt that “increasing the presence of post-secondary institutions (college, community college, vocational ed) across the city would better prepare citizens for current and emerging jobs.”

At least one respondent suggested creating a more favorable development environment for colleges and universities and another suggested that university jobs be expanded, as they paid higher wages than retail and tourism jobs. Several respondents mentioned the need for the District to invest in UDC, while others

wondered how the universities might do more to hire DC residents and “contract with more DC-resident based businesses.”

Encourage New Employment (offices, stores, light industry, etc.) Along Corridor Streets and in New Mixed Use Areas Outside Downtown to Improve Access to Employment in our Neighborhoods. (What areas might be considered?)

Respondents: 78
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 82%

Although more than 80 percent of the respondents felt this was “important” or “very important,” the tone of the written responses was less than enthusiastic. Most of the written comments addressed the kind of development that should not occur, rather than the kind that should occur. Several residents indicated they did not want large office buildings in neighborhoods, and suggested instead more emphasis on neighborhood-serving retail and small businesses. One respondent emphasized retention of entry-level federal jobs in the city.

Provide Opportunities for Small Neighborhood Businesses by Providing Additional Financial Assistance, Such as Loans and Seed Money

Respondents: 77
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 82%

Respondents showed support for incentives and programs to sustain small businesses. The value of entrepreneurship was raised several times, especially with respect to youth, immigrants, and businesses hiring DC residents. One respondent emphasized respect for creativity and hard work. Another stressed partnerships with community based organizations (to promote business development) in areas east of the Anacostia River.

Implement Land Use and Zoning Changes along New Job Corridors, such as Georgia Avenue and Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue to Allow More Development in these Areas and New Land Uses while Protecting Nearby Neighborhoods from Negative Impacts

Respondents: 77
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 77%

There appeared to be little discussion of this topic beyond what was described earlier under item “Encourage New Employment” above. Several comments indicated that the communities themselves should decide where zoning changes should happen.

Enact Laws that Help Small Businesses and Protect them from Rising Rents and other Pressures in Commercial Districts

Respondents: 76
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 76%

While there were no written responses dealing with this issue directly, a few comments suggested programs to help small businesses purchase buildings and property. There were also suggestions to help small businesses and sole proprietors by “making paperwork easier” and “reforming DCRA.”

Designate Some of the Large Development Sites in the City for Mixed-Use Development Rather Than Housing Alone

Respondents: 77
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 75%

Written comments on this topic are summarized above (see item “Encourage New Employment”). One respondent suggested St. Elizabeth’s as an employment site, while another suggested Anacostia. Other replies suggested prohibiting development on city-owned green space.

Encourage Tourists to Visit Dc Neighborhoods by Promoting Neighborhood Cultural Attractions, Allowing More B&Bs and Small Inns, and Providing Services for Visitors

Respondents: 77
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 62%

This was the lowest ranked of the eight options. Written comments, where provided, were generally not supportive. One person indicated “no B&Bs in residential neighborhoods if it replaces or transforms residential properties.” Another indicated, “Tourists will discover DC neighborhoods themselves if the neighborhoods are developed.”

Other Comments

Many of the written comments did not address the eight discussion points. Three topics seemed to come up regularly, and these are profiled below.

Job Training and Living Wage Issues: Comments on some of the worksheets addressed the need for job training facilities and supportive services. For example, one respondent suggested family support centers that would offer asset-building capacity, day care, health clinic space, and other social services as well as job training. Several respondents discussed the importance of a living wage, in the context of being able to afford housing the city. Addressing the needs of “underemployed” residents as well as “unemployed” residents also was raised.

Hiring of DC Residents: Several respondents suggested incentives (or requirements) for businesses to hire DC residents. Others requested enforcement of existing requirements and penalties for vendors who did not comply. One respondent felt businesses should reimburse the city for subsidies in the event they did not comply with local hiring laws. At least one commenter suggested a requirement that non-profits hire DC residents as a condition of keeping their property tax-exempt status.

Curriculum: A number of respondents addressed the importance of quality education. Comments ranged from “keep kids in school all year long” to “Create arts, cultural, and recreation opportunities for youth.” As one respondent summed it up, “DC residents should be able to get the same education that suburban kids get.”

Housing Choices

There is an overwhelming sense that the need for affordable housing in the city is at “an emergency crisis status”. This is borne out by the number of people attending the Housing sessions (more than any other), the emotional intensity of the worksheet comments, and the numerical scores on the Housing worksheets. Many participants ranked every single one of the listed options for increasing affordable housing as “very

important.” As one participant summed it up, “I am really afraid of the current state of housing in DC. My family and I would not be able to afford a home in the city at the present time and we are comfortable middle class”. Another said that the loss of the city’s affordable housing was “a terrible tragedy for the District of Columbia.”

A summary of responses and comments on each of the 11 discussion points is provided below. The discussion points are listed in terms of the number of participants at the four workshops who ranked them as “very important” or “important”. This report also provides an overview of the written comments from participants on topics that were not included on the “survey” portion of the worksheet.

Enact Tax Rules that Will Help Senior and Lower Income Households Avoid Financial Hardships as Home Prices Rise

Respondents: 153

Percent ranking this as a “very important or “important” priority: 94%

This issue was rated “very important” or “important” by more participants than any other topic discussed in the Housing Choices sessions. Written suggestions called for property tax reforms, more tax breaks for seniors and disabled households, and “exchanging” the tax incentives currently offered to office developers with new incentives for affordable housing developers. Another suggested reducing tax rates on buildings and increasing tax rates on land values and vacant buildings (as a means of promoting housing construction on vacant or underused land).

One person proposed “replacing existing tax caps and transferring them to lower income households.” Another suggested letting DC “take the risk of giving home ownership loans to low income renters to encourage as many renters to become owners as possible.” In some instances, the responses suggested a lack of awareness of the existing programs assisting seniors and low income households in the city, indicating a need for more outreach and education by District government.

Improve Neighborhood Services to Create a More Desirable Setting for Families and Other Households

Respondents: 145

Percent ranking this as a “very important or “important” priority: 89%

While few respondents commented directly on this topic on the housing worksheets (one described it as a “no brainer”), there were many indirect references to the need for improved services and amenities. Participants spoke to the need to close the “disconnect between the city’s physical assets and its human assets.” This was raised in the context of providing supportive services (along with housing) such as job training and child care. Another respondent spoke of the importance of libraries, rec centers, retail options, and good schools to attracting families. The need for improved schools (as a way to keep families in the city)—and for adequate school capacity—was also raised.

Many respondents spoke to the benefits of a diverse population, i.e. low income, young professionals, and students in all neighborhoods. Others spoke to the need for diversity in community development; e.g., that development should include “shopping, dining and entertainment and not just housing.” As one respondent put it, “[our ward] does not need a Starbucks or another laundry facility. It needs health clubs, bookstores, and shopping areas”. Another respondent called for “vibrant, mixed income communities that will help create greater opportunity for valuable social networks and allow residents to avoid displacement by market rate housing”.

Conserve Today's Affordable Housing, Especially in Developments with Expiring Federal Subsidies

Respondents: 147
Percent ranking this as a "very important or "important" priority: 87%

This was ranked third among the 11 priorities listed. Few respondents provided written comments on expiring subsidies, but several spoke to the importance of conserving housing for very low income households. There was a suggestion that housing vouchers be provided for single parents, a proposal for a District-funded Section 8 program (to preserve units after the federal funds expire), and a recommendation to use TIF (tax increment financing) funds for housing. One commenter pointed to the need for housing for returning ex-offenders, TANF recipients, and others on public assistance.

Affordable housing was described as a "fundamental right" by one respondent. Another respondent asked, "Once people secure affordable housing, how can we help them keep it?" This same response spoke to the importance of housing counseling and education, protection from predatory lenders and contractors, and reverse mortgages for seniors. One respondent described herself as "a single Mom with two children in college, two in high school and one in junior high school [who is] fighting, hoping, and praying that affordable housing will remain throughout the city."

Enact Zoning Laws with Incentives for Affordable Housing within New Housing Developments across the City (Also Called Inclusionary Zoning)

Respondents: 149
Percent ranking this as a "very important or "important" priority: 87%

Many of the worksheets included written comments on inclusionary zoning. Supporters of mandatory inclusionary zoning wrote with great conviction that current proposals "did not go deep enough" and felt that voluntary programs had "no teeth." At least one suggestion was made to require that 30% of all units in new projects be affordable. Another suggested a 30% affordability requirement for any project on public land. Several respondents cited the need for affluent neighborhoods to have more affordable housing than they do currently. Another person quipped, "These proposals come so late, it is doubtful that they will help low income people—they will all be gone."

Conversely, there were concerns that inclusionary zoning would result in increased density, which could harm neighborhood quality. One respondent feared the city would "impose dense and high rise housing on neighborhoods that don't want it," causing "stress on neighborhood traffic, parking, schools, and flow of emergency vehicles." A few respondents felt that inclusionary zoning:

- had unintended consequences
- would "seriously damage development"
- would be "a nightmare to implement"
- required enforcement which the City was not prepared to provide.

Enact Tax City-Financed, Low-Interest Loans for Home Rehabilitation

Respondents: 152
Percent ranking this as a "very important or "important" priority: 83%

Although 83 percent of the respondents felt this was important or very important, there were few specific written comments. One respondent felt the city had done a poor job administering such programs in the

past. Another commented that affordable housing must be safe and decent as well as affordable, noting that “a cheap house that’s falling apart doesn’t benefit any family.”

Create Incentives to Enable Low-Income Renters and Home Owners to Remain in Historic Neighborhoods

Respondents: 148
Percent ranking this as a “very important or “important” priority: 82%

Again, this statement was ranked as a high priority, but there were few specific comments addressing the topic. Most of the comments are covered elsewhere in this summary.

Provide Incentives for Mixed Income or Market Rate Housing Developments in Areas of the City Where there is Weak Market Interest

Respondents: 147
Percent ranking this as a “very important or “important” priority: 80%

The rankings suggest a relatively high level of support, although there are concerns that incentives could lead to displacement in low-income communities. One respondent acknowledged the importance of public investment in areas of weak demand, noting that we “can’t rely on the market to do anything more than follow where the public sector leads.”

There were several suggestions to spread affordable housing more evenly across the city. One implied support for mixed income housing by pointing out the problems that have occurred where low income housing was over-concentrated. Another noted that “homeowners and renters living next door is a good thing.” Still another called for “more living wage housing in upper NW and more jobs/businesses in SE.”

Share the Responsibility in all Neighborhoods to House People with Special Needs

Respondents: 147
Percent ranking this as a “very important or “important” priority: 78%

Among those providing written comments on this topic, there were mixed responses. Some felt that special needs housing should be spread more evenly across the city. Comments tended to focus on homeless shelters. One person wrote, “We need to ensure that all neighborhoods have special needs homeless shelters, drug treatment facilities, etc. so that no one neighborhood has a disproportionate number of such facilities.” Another wrote that such facilities should be “integrated into the community as much as possible so people don’t stand out but can lead normal lives.”

On the other hand, some simply called for moratoriums on special needs facilities. Another wrote that shelters and SROs should be kept downtown near social services.

Link Office and Commercial Development in Central Washington to Affordable Housing Development in the Neighborhoods

Respondents: 144
Percent ranking this as a “very important or “important” priority: 77%

There were no comments addressing the “linkage” issue directly. However, written comments did address the need for employer-assisted housing programs. One respondent wrote, “Large employers like colleges and universities, hospitals, etc. have a vested interest in the city and it would enhance the quality

of life for many of their employees if their commutes could be shortened and access to their workplace were enhanced.” Another suggested that the city offer assistance to employers who were willing to provide employee housing.

Protect Renters from Increasing Rents in Apartments, Row Homes and Single-Family Homes

Respondents: 149
Percent ranking this as a “very important or “important” priority: 77%

Among those who commented on this topic, there was strong agreement on the need to close loopholes in rent control laws and maintain and improve rent control. At least one commenter pointed out that the city could not regulate rents in single family homes and small buildings, however. Respondents also addressed the importance of tenant education (about legal rights), and programs to help tenants buy their units.

Provide Incentives for New Rental Unit Developments to Include More Three-Bedroom Units for Families

Respondents: 55
Percent ranking this as a “very important or “important” priority: 75%

Although this was the lowest ranked priority among the 11 choices, it was still considered “very important” by 37 percent of the respondents and “important” by another 38 percent. One respondent went so far as to suggest a moratorium on one and two bedroom units. The commenter added that, “More families makes DC a stronger city and achieves an increase in population in the future.”

Other Comments

Several other topics were raised by many of the participants. These are profiled below:

Living Wage: The need to raise income (to reduce the housing cost burden) came up several times. Several respondents spoke to the need for a living wage “so people can better afford to live here.” There was also a suggestion to train and educate DC residents in construction trades, so that residents could build and rehabilitate the very affordable units they might then occupy. The importance of workforce housing to serve working poor and middle class was also raised.

Alternative Housing Types: Several respondents called for changes to zoning laws to permit (or promote) more flexibility in housing types. One person spoke to alternatives such as co-housing, and another suggested that granny flats (accessory units) be more liberally regulated in low density neighborhoods. Another asked for more limited equity co-ops in the city.

Operations: There were several suggestions related to operational issues. One person suggested that permits for group homes be reviewed like liquor licenses. Another suggested revising building codes to require environmentally sound building practices and green buildings. There were also specific suggestions for more transparency in the way the Housing Production Trust fund monies are spent. Several people spoke to the need for more collaborative decision-making, partnerships, and outreach. At least one respondent brought up the need for better code enforcement and “DCRA reform.”

Environmental Quality

The Environmental Quality sessions had fewer attendees than the Land Use/ Transportation and Housing sessions, but still had lively and important dialogues. Residents expressed serious concerns about the health of the District’s environment, and offered creative ideas and proposals for addressing environmental challenges. Although the workshop discussion sheets focused on parks, open space, trees, and sustainability, the written comments reflected a much broader range of issues. Meeting participants wrote about topics as diverse as brownfields, recycling, odors, potable water, air quality, sanitation, and solar energy.

A summary of responses and comments on each of the nine discussion points is provided below. The discussion points are listed in terms of the number of participants at the four workshops who ranked them as “very important” or “important”. This report also provides an overview of the written comments from participants on topics that were not included on the “survey” portion of the worksheet.

Increase Emphasis on “Green” Development and Government Practices such as Building and Site Design Standards, Recycling, Alternative Energy Sources, Re-Use of Gray Water, etc.

Respondents: 84
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 87%

This was ranked as a “very important” priority by 70 percent of the workshop participants and “important” by another 17 percent. Two comments provide insight into public opinion on this topic:

- “I think that we’re collectively missing an opportunity to make a huge positive change by not encouraging/requiring developers (of all kinds) to use environmentally sustainable materials and techniques”
- “Institute green design requirements and incentives in residential, commercial, government buildings and renovations, including green roofs, recycled concrete and other materials from demolition; and encourage the use of recycled and sustainable building materials.”

While the number of written comments on green development was relatively small, a few people spoke to the need for better information about green buildings, particularly data on green development costs and green building technology. Some participants also addressed “smart growth” principles (promoting pedestrian-friendly design, accommodating bicycles, etc.) in their comments. The benefits of solar and renewable energy sources also were raised.

Make Parks and Green Space an Important Part of all Development Projects, in Some Cases by Clustering Buildings on Sites to Leave More Room for Open Land

Respondents: 83
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 87%

This point virtually tied green development in the overall ratings. However, comments focused on the conservation of open space outright rather than the inclusion of open space within development. Several residents expressed concerns about over-development, and requested policies to prohibit the use of parkland and federal open space for development. Some respondents believed that inclusionary zoning proposals would result in parkland and schoolyards being converted to housing.

Comments suggested that the city “encourage redevelopment of already built areas to leave as much natural space as possible” and “take into account the open space network (in development review) and encourage developers to establish conservation easements.” Respondents also suggested that increases in allowable height should trigger requirements for more open space.

Improve Environmental Education in our Schoolyard and in the Community at Large

Respondents: 84
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 86%

Of the nine listed topics, this one generated more written comments than any of the others. The comments not only called for expanding environmental education but also starting it early. One respondent called for “More environmental education in the schools, starting with pre-K, and using the environment in the schoolyard”. Another said “Environmental education, including resource conservation and reuse—should be included in school curriculum throughout K-12.” The need for environmental education for adults also was raised, particularly with respect to topics such as lead and radon. Creative methods of education were also recommended (“Don’t just say ‘recycle, don’t litter’. Reinforce the community and individual benefits.”)

Environmental education was also referenced indirectly. Respondents noted that environmental education could foster a sense of personal responsibility and was a good way to engage citizens in government. The need for park signage to educate users about environmental protection (trees, plants, etc.) also was raised.

Increase Restrictions on Development in Sensitive Natural Areas, such as Steep Slopes and Streambanks

Respondents: 84
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 85%

Again, an overwhelming majority of respondents felt it was important to limit development in sensitive natural areas. One observer wrote, “Increased economic development is ruining the environment,” while another cautioned, “Stop chipping away at protected areas.” Some respondents wrote of the importance of fish and wildlife habitat (including residential backyards), and the relationship of urban development to water quality. Another asked that the “pristine woodlands” on Walter Reed Hospital be preserved. The need to preserve land adjacent to parks (especially steep slopes) was raised. Coordination with adjacent jurisdictions (in Maryland) also was raised.

Make Substantial Investments in Tree Planting, Especially in Areas Which Lack Tree Cover Now

Respondents: 86
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 84%

Suggestions ranged from better education for homeowners (on tree care responsibility) to tree planting recommendations for specific streets. There were requests to strengthen the city’s tree regulations, improve tree maintenance, require tree preservation during construction, and elevate the discussion of urban forestry in the Comp Plan. One suggestion called for 100 more trees along I-295; another called for more emphasis on tree preservation (in addition to tree planting), while another called for “tree planting in areas where seniors live.”

A different viewpoint, expressed by several respondents, was that the sessions were too heavily focused on trees. One commenter felt that trees were an “easy issue” and that more focus should be placed on broader environmental questions; another requested a focus on zoning changes to require more pervious surface (rather than more trees).

Use School Grounds More Effectively for Community/Local Park and Recreation Areas

Respondents: 85
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 79%

The written comments showed a long history of wrangling over this issue by concerned citizens. Several respondents described the history of DC schoolyards, lamenting the paving of once-green schoolyards and requesting a change in DCPS construction policy. Some suggested that DCPS unlock more schoolyards and make them available to neighbors for recreation. Concerns were also expressed about the use of schoolyards for parking. As noted earlier, there were several respondents who feared that schoolyards would become development sites in the future.

Environmental stewardship of school property also was raised. One respondent suggested that the city “promote and encourage environmentally sensitive development on school property.” Another stated, “Encourage the school system to modernize facilities and grounds in an environmentally conscious way to reduce combined sewer overflow, improve landscaping and tree cover, and improve air quality”.

Work with the Federal Government to Include More Active Recreation and Community Uses on Federal Parklands, and to Place More Federal Land under District Control

Respondents: 80
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 59%

There was a great deal of skepticism expressed, with some believing that District ownership would result in federal parks being over programmed or “flipped” for sale to developers. Two respondents spoke in favor of the concept, with one suggesting this was “key” to developing larger community parks. The other suggested that Rock Creek Park be transferred to the District so that it could become more dynamic and active. However, the majority of respondents were cautious (“the District doesn’t have the money [for maintenance]”), and questioned the city’s motivations (“DC will only turn around and build buildings.”)

On a more neutral note, several respondents wrote about the need for good park planning and the “re-greening” of DC’s parks. One respondent suggested a better balance between active and passive open space, and another spoke about the importance of stewardship in the Rock Creek watershed.

Acquire Land to Complete the Fort Circle Parks and Create a “Green Necklace” Around the District

Respondents: 80
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 54%

Some of the same concerns raised in the prior question (regarding financing and maintenance) surfaced in comments on the Fort Circle. The number of people listing this as a “very important” priority was relatively low (21%). The one specific comment made was that this should be a “federal priority” rather than a District responsibility.

Focus City Investment on a Handful of Larger Community Parks

Respondents: 83
Percent ranking this as a “very important” or “important” priority: 33%

This was the only discussion point that was not supported by a majority of respondents. Not only was this ranked as a low priority on the worksheets, it was also deemed a bad idea (in one case, a “terrible” idea) by most of those submitting written comments. As one respondent said, “how can we focus on large parks when land is at a premium and it is impossible to get a tract in a dense area?” Another implored, “don’t just focus on a few parks—that’s to the detriment of small neighborhood parks”.

Several comments related to the siting of new parks were received in this context, including:

- “Create active useable public spaces (pocket parks)—bigger and passive is not necessarily better”
- “Save/improve existing parks and recreation centers”
- “More open land not necessarily better for pedestrians or to meet public space needs. Make bigger parks truly useable, safe, attractive, for residents”.
- “(Put) parks near Metro so others can access them”

Speaking about the need for better park maintenance, one commenter wrote, “I grew up in this area and as a child I enjoyed birthday parties, block parties, and church/school activities at my neighborhood park. Now that I am an adult, it breaks my heart that parks are polluted and therefore children/ community residents (taxpayers) cannot enjoy nature.”

Other

As mentioned in the Introduction, the Environmental Quality comment sheet elicited many comments on issues not covered on the handout (one commenter stated “missing from these options are air quality; water quality (drinking water, combined sewer overflow), stream and creek protection/restoration; conservation (use less energy, choose fluorescent lights, turn off computers/ building lights at night, use less water)”). Another asked “environmental health—is that covered anywhere?” Another reminded us of “dark skies, control of noise pollution, brownfields redevelopment and clean up of hazardous waste and contaminated sites”.

These comments can be grouped in several major categories:

Administration: Six respondents called for the District to establish an Office of Environmental Protection. Some elaborated on the function of such an office (establish environmental quality performance measures, etc.). Better collaboration between agencies was also suggested. Others suggested that the District set 10- and 50-year goals, and collect and monitor more environmental data to determine its progress in reaching these goals.

Air and Water quality: Many respondents called for improving the District’s air and water quality. This ranged from general statements (“Improving air quality is crucial to our health”) to more specific recommendations (“the proposed multi-decade system (to addressing combined sewer overflows) seems to be an incomplete solution.”). Participants commented that drinking water infrastructure should be improved and that replacement of lead pipes must be a top priority. Air quality concerns were raised in the context of improving the timing of traffic lights, reducing truck traffic in neighborhoods, and reducing idling from parked vehicles and buses. Finally, one respondent called for “Congressional representation so we can be involved in developing effective policies for clean air and water”.

Hazardous Materials: Hazardous materials were addressed in a number of ways. Several worksheets addressed the importance of cleaning up brownfields. One person wrote: “Brownfields re-use should be heightened – will benefit or increase green spaces and water quality.” Another wrote: “Brownfields cleanup will help protect existing green space; can increase green space, and aid in redevelopment.” Some participants mentioned specific sites (Spring Valley, UDC, Camp Simms, etc.). On another front, the need for regulation of hazardous materials transport (e.g., by train and truck) was mentioned by several participants, while the importance of separating industrial and residential uses was mentioned by others.

Operations: Many of the comments addressed environmental issues from an operational perspective, mentioning the need for bridge repair (to improve water quality), control of train noise, and better control of odors from the Blue Plains wastewater plant. Several respondents called for improvements to the city’s recycling program, such as providing recycling bins to all residences. The need for better enforcement of environmental laws also was mentioned. Trash clean-up and park maintenance issues (including the control of dogs and the upgrading of “triangles” along boulevards) came up several times, although at least one respondent felt the city was improving in this area.

Aesthetics and Community Standards: Several comments related to the physical (but not necessarily natural) environment were made, including the undergrounding of utilities and expansion of community gardening programs. One commenter suggested the city “retain a landscape architect to properly landscape existing areas with seasonal flowers and bushes.” Streetscape improvements and beautification were mentioned several times, and at least one person commented that the city “looked too shabby.”

Section Three

Meeting Evaluation Comments

At each of the public meetings, participants were asked to fill out an evaluation form that solicited their opinions regarding the location of the meeting, the format of the meeting and how helpful the meeting was for them to better involve them in the Comp Plan Revision process.

The table on the following page summarizes some of the key responses and also lists the percentage of total attendees who turned in evaluation forms. The “good” or “excellent” response percentages refer to how many respondents circled 1 or 2 on a 1 to 5 scale of satisfaction regarding the location, the materials handed out, the sessions themselves and other aspects of these events.

Those who turned in evaluations were generally satisfied with the format and level of discussions. Some additional comments were made on the forms. Many of these covered the pros and cons of the facilitation methods used, and whether or not their participation and comments will be taken into account by those who will make the final decisions.

Table 1: Tabulation of Meeting Evaluation Comments

	McKinley	Paul	Ballou	Shaw	Total
Attendance	150	130	115	135	530
Meeting Evaluation Forms collected	55	83	37	51	226
Percent of attendees who turned in a meeting evaluation	37%	64%	32%	38%	43%
Percent rating location as good or excellent	89%	80%	78%	81%	82%
Percent rating the packet materials as good or excellent	81%	72%	83%	80%	78%
Percent rating the opening session as good or excellent	94%	74%	91%	88%	85%
Percent rating the first discussion session as good or excellent	94%	89%	89%	95%	91%
Percent rating the second and third discussion as good or excellent	92%	89%	84%	78%	85%
Percent rating the closing session as good or excellent	N/A	N/A	N/A	86%	86%

	YES	NO	NOT SURE	Total
Do you feel that today's meeting helped the Comp Plan Revision Process?	127	13	74	214
Percentage	59%	6%	35%	100.0%
Do you feel that you were able to make a contribution to the discussion and to DC's future?	167	11	36	214
Percentage	78%	5%	17%	100.0%
Do you plan to continue to be involved in the Comp Plan revision?	199	1	16	216
Percentage	92%	0.5%	7%	100.0%

The following are the verbatim evaluation comments from all the meetings held during Comp Plan Week #1. They are grouped by the location at which they were submitted.

McKinley Technology High School

- Workshop facilitators need to be informed about Comp Plan process. How will workshop comments be used? The facilitator could not answer questions.
- In general, facilitator should have more familiarity with topic and comp plan. Facilitator could not answer basic questions on housing.
- Discussion got into areas not covered by Comp Plan, e.g. programs. Facilitator should know what's relevant and what's not.
- Discussion was not framed well. Asking people "what should we do about affordable housing" lead to an unorganized conversation.
- Transportation/land use – no time for land use. Make separate.
- Helped – Yes, if gov't planners take our comments into account!
- Contribution – Yes, in the smaller session.
- Provide more details of the meeting format in ads. I missed the opening session entirely.
- Enjoyed seeing McKinley Tech.
- Authorization for proceeding in the present process under DC Law quite unclear. We have a strong reg. For planning and detailed Ward Plans – we need to stick with this model.
- Too far from Metro.
- Needed a Ward 6 location.

Paul Public Charter School

- Housing – more info from City needed.
- Housing – excellent facilitator
- Please provide demographic information and use of services in hand-out.
- Not much time for serious discussion. Comments may or may not be relevant to the Comp Plan process.
- The dancer segment was entertaining but unnecessary.
- Facilitator method was good. Went around in order and everyone got to say something.
- Facilitator method good, but not effective because special interests dominated (Tenleytown/Friendship Heights). The Comp Plan frames actions for the common good and individual interest. Some people may care about their neighborhood, not what is better for the whole: NIMBY. OP needs to ensure good process and really identify and handle the issues. E.g. are people against density in their neighborhood or against how it is proposed to be done? Use visual tools and images – show people existing conditions and proposed – photoshopped - to help identify and resolve issues.
- Brainstorming not impact discussion. Need to wait and see to know if today's meeting helped the Comp Plan revision process.
- If used, today's meeting can help the Comp Plan revision process.
- Housing – is it too late?
- Make the entire Vision Statement available.
- Not sure if OP or the TF are getting the points of view expressed tonight.
- I made a contribution to the discussion, but I don't know about DC's future.
- I would like to be involved in Comp Plan revision if they allow citizens to be part of it.
- The first hour was a waste of time – lose it. The discussion periods were fine. I hope today's meeting helped the Comp Plan revision process and contributed to DC's future.
- OP will ignore so today's meeting did not help the Comp Plan revision process.
- It would be good if meeting began at 6:30PM or later.

- DC doesn't often listen. I'm a victim of Columbia Heights.
- It really depends on outcome if tonight's discussion contributes to DC's future. The facilitators were very good.
- Materials were too driven by OP development agenda.
- More sessions are needed. Young people, unemployed, elderly, etc. should be a part of future sessions, not just community leaders, the well-educated, etc.

Ballou Senior High School

- More work is needed. Can't be done in these limited sessions.
- Not enough time. Need appropriate feedback to residents/ANCs/civic organizations.
- ...want to be involved "As always, but it's so disappointing to keep meeting, filling out evaluations, listing concerns and still remain hopeless. DC resident Ward 8.
- I have been involved in planning for this city for 30 years. Still waiting for the change in my neighborhood re: better lights, less commuter traffic, available city services, etc., etc., etc.,
- ...helped the Comp Plan revision process? I won't know until later.
- I would like to be a member of the Task Force. Please contact me with a yes or no.

Shaw Junior High School

- ...helped Comp Plan revision process? Depends on implementation.
- ...contribute to DC's future? Not yet.
- ...involved in revision? Probably. That depends on you.
- Helped Comp Plan revision process? It is pretty much being decided elsewhere.
- ...helped Comp Plan revision process? Depends on what you do with our input.
- I know this is a tough one...but in DC planning "the squeaky wheel always gets the grease". Residents, often speaking only for their narrow interests, are consistently given much more consideration than they deserve. Residents have a big role in this process, but let's make the sure the "usual critics" are not allowed to dictate the process. Thanks!
- Copies of Vision should have been available.
- ...contribution to DC's future? Hopefully.
- Need more input from all sectors.
- Sat AM session was too early. I could not access any of the library documents on your website. The links appeared to be dead. Also, I am wondering if you could provide the documents in a .txt format. My computer is very old and slow and it takes a long time to download .pdf files. (I work from home so I don't have access to a faster computer.)
- The process throughout needs to be fair, i.e. no last minute, late night amendments that the public has not seen or vetted.
- I am glad to have been a witness to this process. Even though I wasn't here for very long.
- Refreshments were not ready – come earlier☺
- Spent time discussing issues outside of sessions.
- ...helped Comp Plan revision process? Hope so! ...contributed to DC's future? Hope so! Ward 3 cannot continue to be run by NIMBYs. The public good must certainly take precedence. The Comp Plan MUST encode our city's priorities for the welfare of all its residents in all its neighborhoods.
- ...helped Comp Plan revision process? If they listen!
- ...opening session too early. Session on transportation/land use not enough time.
- ...helped Comp Plan revision process? Yes, though not enough time for in-depth discussion.